

FREE THOUGHTS,
ON
The PROCEEDINGS of
THE
CONTINENTAL CONGRESS,

Held at PHILADELPHIA Sept. 5, 1774:

WHEREIN
Their ERRORS are exhibited,
THEIR
REASONINGS CONFUTED,
AND

The fatal Tendency of their NON-IMPORTATION, NON-EXPORTATION, and NON-CONSUMPTION MEASURES, are laid open to the plainest UNDERSTANDING;

AND
The ONLY MEANS pointed out
For Preserving and Securing
Our present HAPPY CONSTITUTION:

IN
A LETTER
TO
THE FARMERS,
AND OTHER INHABITANTS OF
NORTH AMERICA
In General,

And to those of the Province of *New-York*
In Particular.

By a FARMER.

Hear me, for I WILL speak!

PRINTED IN THE YEAR M.DCC.LXXIV.



F R

Co

P

Colon
discon
of gov
Indivi
quent
had c
situat
Cong
ms.
exped
happy
adop
ever
peace
ignor
ed. th

FREE THOUGHTS,

O N

The PROCEEDINGS of

T H E

Congress at Philadelphia, &c.

My Friends and Countrymen,

PERMIT me to address you upon a subject, which, next to your eternal welfare in a future world, demands your most serious and dispassionate consideration. The American Colonies are unhappily involved in a scene of confusion and discord. The bands of civil society are broken; the authority of government weakened, and in some instances taken away: Individuals are deprived of their liberty; their property is frequently invaded by violence, and not a single Magistrate has had courage or virtue enough to interpose. From this distressed situation it was hoped, that the wisdom and prudence of the Congress lately assembled at Philadelphia, would have delivered us. The eyes of all men were turned to them. We ardently expected that some prudent scheme of accommodating our unhappy disputes with the Mother-Country, would have been adopted and pursued. But alas! they are broken up without ever attempting it: they have taken no one step that tended to peace: they have gone on from bad to worse, and have either ignorantly misunderstood, carelessly neglected, or basely betrayed the interests of all the Colonies.

A 2

I shall

I shall in this, and some future publication, support this charge against the Congress, by incontestible facts : But my first business shall be to point out to you some of the consequences that will probably follow from the Non-importation, Non-exportation, and Non-consumption Agreements, which they have adopted, and which they have ordered to be enforced in the most arbitrary manner, and under the severest penalties. On this subject, I choose to address myself principally to You the *Farmers* of the Province of New-York, because I am most nearly connected with you, being one of your number, and having no interest in the country but in common with you ; and also, because the interest of the farmers in general will be more sensibly affected, and more deeply injured by these agreements, than the interest of any other body of people on the continent. Another reason why I choose to address myself to you is, because the Farmers are of the greatest benefit to the state, of any people in it : They furnish food for the merchant, and mechanic ; the raw materials for most manufactures, the staple exports of the country, are the produce of their industry : be then convinced of your own importance, and think and act accordingly.

The Non-importation Agreement adopted by the Congress is to take place the first day of December next ; after which no goods, wares, or merchandize, are to be imported from Great-Britain or Ireland ; no East-India Tea from any part of the world ; no molasses, syrups, paneles, coffee, or pimento, from our islands in the West-Indies ; no wine from Madeira, or the Western-Islands ; no foreign indigo.

The Non-Exportation Agreement is to take effect on the tenth day of September next ; after which we are not to export, directly or indirectly, any merchandize or commodity whatsoever to Great-Britain, Ireland, or the West-Indies, except RICE to Europe,---unless the several acts and parts of acts of the British Parliament, referred to by the fourth article of Association, be repealed.

The Non-consumption Agreement is to be in force the first day of March next ; after which we are not to purchase or use any East-India Tea whatsoever ; nor any goods, wares, or merchandize from Great-Britain or Ireland, imported after the first of December, nor molasses, &c. from the West-Indies ; nor wine from Madeira, or the Western Islands, nor foreign indigo.

Let

Let
ments.
to. T
mobs.
and t
diately
a prob
happen
ments
manu
ment-
of flax
India
and b
by the
ours,
undow
frames
and pa

But
The r
and o
been
Shall
to flax
witho
insurr
proba
unset
fusion
ill-pr
colon
Grea
we lo
whole
conte
migh
jesty's
the C
such

Ne
meas
the p

Let us now consider the probable consequences of these agreements, supposing they should take place, and be exactly adhered to. The first I shall mention is, clamours, discord, confusion, mobs, riots, insurrections, rebellions, in Great-Britain, Ireland, and the West-Indies. This consequence does not indeed immediately affect You, the Farmers of New-York; nor do I think it a probable one: But the Congress certainly intended it should happen in some degree, or the effect they propose from these agreements cannot possibly take place. They intend to distress the manufacturers in Great-Britain, by depriving them of employment-- to distress the inhabitants of Ireland, by depriving them of flax-seed, and of a vent for their linens,—to distress the West-India people, by with-holding provisions and lumber from them, and by stopping the market for their produce. And they hope, by these means, to force them all to join their clamours with ours, to get the acts complained of, repealed. This was the undoubted design of the Congress when these agreements were framed; and this is the avowed design of their warm supporters and partizans, in common conversation.

But where is the justice, where is the policy of this procedure? The manufacturers of Great-Britain, the inhabitants of Ireland, and of the West-Indies, have done us no injury. They have been no ways instrumental in bringing our distresses upon us. Shall we then revenge ourselves upon them? Shall we endeavour to starve them into a compliance with our humours? Shall we, without any provocation, tempt or force them into riots and insurrections, which must be attended with the ruin of many--- probably with the death of some of them? Shall we attempt to unsettle the whole British Government---to throw all into confusion, because our self-will is not complied with? Because the ill-projected, ill-conducted, abominable scheme of some of the colonists, to form a republican government independent of Great-Britain, cannot otherwise succeed?---Good God! can we look forward to the ruin, destruction, and desolation of the whole British Empire, without one relenting thought? Can we contemplate it with pleasure; and promote it with all our might and vigour, and at the same time call ourselves *his Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects*? Whatever the Gentlemen of the Congress may think of the matter, the spirit that dictated such a measure, was not the spirit of humanity.

Next let us consider the policy, or rather impolicy of this measure. Instead of conciliating, it will alienate the affections of the people of Great-Britain. Of friends it will make them our enemies;

enemies; it will excite the resentment of the government at home against us; and their resentment will do us no good, but, on the contrary, much harm.

Can we think to threaten, and bully, and frighten the supreme government of the nation into a compliance with our demands? Can we expect to force a submission to our peevish and petulant humours, by exciting clamors and riots in England? We ought to know the temper and spirit, the power and strength of the nation better. A single campaign, should she exert her force, would ruin us effectually. But should she choose less violent means, she has it in her power to humble us without hurting herself. She might raise immense revenues, by laying duties in England, Ireland and the West-Indies, and we could have no remedy left; for this non-importation scheme cannot last forever. She can embarrass our trade in the Mediterranean with Spain, Holland &c. nor can we help ourselves; for whatever regulations she should make, would effectually be enforced, by the same Navy that she keeps in readiness to protect her own trade.

We shall also, probably, raise the resentment of the Irish and West-Indians. The passions of human nature are much the same in all countries. If they find us disposed wantonly to distress them, to serve our own purposes, will they not look out for some method to do without us? Will they not seek else-where for a supply of those articles, which they used to take from us? They would deserve to be despised for their meanness, did they not.

Holland, the Baltic, and the river St. Lawrence, would afford the Irish a sufficient supply of flax-seed. If they look out in time they cannot be disappointed. Canada produces no inconsiderable quantity already.—

I have been well informed, that many bushels have been bought up there at a low price, brought to New-York, and sold to the Irish factors at a great advance. Are the Irish such novices in navigation, that they cannot find the way to Quebec? Or are they so blind to their own interest, as to continue giving a high price for flax-seed at New-York, when they might have a considerable supply from Canada, at a much more reasonable rate?

You will say that as soon as the Irish send their ships to Quebec for seed, the price will rise till it comes to an equality with ours. I know it. I know also, that the more the price rises, the

the more Canadians will be encouraged to raise it. I know also, that the more they raise and sell, the less demand there will be for ours, and the less price it will fetch at market.

Nor should we distress the inhabitants of the West-Indies so much as at first sight we may imagine. Those islands produce now many of the necessaries of life. The quantity may easily be increased. Canada would furnish them with many articles they now take from us; flour, lumber, horses, &c. Georgia, the Floridas, and the Mississippi abound in lumber; Nova-Scotia in fish. All these countries would be enriched by our folly, and would laugh at it.

When a trading people carelessly neglect, or wilfully give up any branch of their trade, it is seldom in their power to recover it. Should the Irish turn their trade for flax-seed to Quebec; and the West-Indians get their flour, horses, &c. from thence, or other places; the loss to the farmers of this province would be immense. The last non-importation scheme turned the Indian trade from New-York down the river St. Lawrence; we are now repeating, with regard to our flour and flax-seed, the same blunder we then committed with regard to the Indian trade. The consequence, however, will be much worse. The loss of the Indian trade, was a loss to the merchants only; but the loss of the flax-seed trade, will be a loss to every farmer in the province; and a loss which he will severely feel.

You know, my Friends, that the sale of your seed not only pays your taxes, but furnishes you with many of the little conveniences, and comforts of life; the loss of it for one year would be of more damage to you, than paying the three-penny duty on tea for twenty. Let us compare matters a little. It was inconvenient for me this year to sow more than one bushel of seed. I have threshed and cleaned up eleven bushels. The common price now is at least ten shillings;* my seed then will fetch me five pounds, ten shillings. But I will throw in the ten shillings for expences. There remain five pounds: in five pounds are four hundred three-pences; four hundred three-pences currency, will pay the duty upon two hundred pounds of tea, even reckoning the exchange with London at 200 per cent. that is, reckoning 100l. sterling, to be equal to 200l. currency; whereas in fact it is only equal to 175 or 180l. at the most. I use in my family about six pounds of tea: few farmers in my neighbourhood

* Since this piece was written, the price of flax-seed is risen to thirteen shillings per bushel.

use so much: but I hate to stint my wife and daughters, or my friendly neighbours when they come to see me. Besides, I like a dish of tea too, especially after a little more than ordinary fatigue in hot weather. Now 200 pounds of tea, at six pounds a year, will last just 33 years, and eight months. So that in order to pay this monstrous duty upon tea, which has raised all this confounded combustion in the country, I have only to sell the produce of a bushel of flax-seed once in THIRTY-THREE years. Ridiculous!

But, to leave jesting. The loss of the sale of your seed only for one year, would be a considerable damage to you. And yet the Congress have been so inattentive to your interests, that they have laid you under, almost, an absolute necessity of losing it the next year. They have decreed, and proclaimed a non-exportation, to commence in September next. The Irish will be alarmed. They will look out somewhere else. Or should they determine to send their ships the earlier, we cannot, without the utmost inconvenience, get our seed to market by that time; especially, not from the remoter parts of the province. The consequence will be, that we must sell our seed at the oil-mills in New-York, just at the price the manufacturers shall please to give us.

Upon the whole then, it is highly improbable that we shall succeed in distressing the people of Great Britain, Ireland, and the West-Indies, so far as to oblige them to join with us in getting the acts of Parliament which we complain of, repealed. The first distress will fall on ourselves: it will be more severely felt by us, than by any part of all his Majesty's dominions; and it will affect us the longest. The fleets of Great-Britain command respect throughout the globe. Her influence extends to every part of the earth. Her manufactures are equal to any, superior to most in the world. Her wealth is great. Her people enterprising, and persevering in their attempts to extend and enlarge and protect her trade. The total loss of our trade would be felt only for a time. Her merchants would turn their attention another way. New sources of trade and wealth would be opened: New schemes pursued. She would soon find a vent for all her manufactures in spite of all we could do. Our malice would hurt ourselves only. Should our schemes distress some branches of her trade, it could be only for a time; and there is ability and humanity enough in the nation to relieve those that are distressed by us, and to put them in some other way of getting their living.

The

The case is very different with us. We have no trade but under the protection of Great-Britain. We can trade no where but where she pleases. We have no influence abroad, no ambassadors, no consuls, no fleet to protect our ships in passing the seas, nor our merchants and people in foreign countries. Should our mad schemes take place, our sailors, ship-carpenters, carmen, sail-makers, riggers, miners, smelters, forge-men, and workers in bar-iron, &c. would be immediately out of employ; and we should have twenty mobs and riots in our own country, before one would happen in Britain or Ireland. Want of food will make these people mad, and they will come in troops upon our farms, and take that by force which they have not money to purchase. And who could blame them? Justice, indeed, might hang them; but the sympathetic eye would drop the tear of humanity on their grave.

The next thing I shall take notice of, is the advanced prices of goods, which will, not only probably, but necessarily, follow, as soon as the non-importation from Great Britain, &c. shall take effect. This is a consequence that most nearly concerns you; nor can you prevent it. You are obliged to buy many articles of clothing. You cannot make them yourselves; or you cannot make them so cheap as you can buy them. You want Woollens for your winter clothing. Few of you have wool enough to answer the purpose. For notwithstanding the boasts of some ignorant, hot-headed men, there is not wool enough on the continent, taking all the colonies together, to supply the inhabitants with stockings. Notwithstanding all the home-spun you can make, many of you find it difficult, at the year's end, to pay the shop-keeper for what the necessities of your families have obliged you to take up. What will you do when the prices of goods are advanced a quarter, for instance, or an half? To say that the prices of goods will not be raised, betrays your ignorance and folly. The price of any commodity always rises in proportion to the demand for it; and the demand always increases in proportion to its scarcity. As soon as the importation ceases in New-York, the quantity of goods will be daily lessened, by daily consumption; and the prices will gradually rise in proportion. "But the merchants of New-York have declared that, they will demand only a reasonable profit." Who is to judge what a reasonable profit is? Why, the merchants. Will they expose their invoices, and the secrets of their trade to you, that you may judge whether their profits are reasonable or not? Certainly they will not. and if they did, you cannot understand them; and, consequently, can form no judgment about them. You have there-

fore nothing to trust to in this case but the honour of the merchants. Let us then consider how far we have reason to trust to their honour.

Not to raise the price of a commodity when it is scarce, and in demand, is contrary to the principles and practice of merchants. Their maxim is, to buy as cheap, and sell as dear, as they can. Will they let you have a piece of goods for twenty shillings, which will fetch them twenty-five? When the stores and shops are full, and a price is demanded which you think unreasonable, you will ask an abatement. If you are refused, you will look elsewhere. But when there are few goods and many buyers, no abatement can be expected. If you won't give the price, your neighbour perhaps is in greater necessity, and *must* give it. Besides, the merchant knows that no more goods can be imported. He knows that the necessities of the country are increasing, and that what you refuse now at twenty shillings, you will be obliged to take, by and by, at twenty five.

But no argument is like matter of fact. You have had one trial of a non-importation agreement some years ago. Pray how did you like it? Were the prices of goods raised on you then? You know they were. What remedy had you? A good Christian remedy indeed, but a hard one---patience---and patience only: The honour of the merchants gave you no relief---confound their honour---it obliged me---it obliged many of you, to take old moth-eaten cloths that had lain rotting in the shops for years, and to pay a monstrous price for them.

Some, indeed, I confess it with gratitude, had honour enough to attempt to regulate the price of Tea, at that time. Did they succeed? No. There was not honour enough in the body of merchants to bring it to effect. Messrs.

declared at the Coffee-House, that they would be bound by no regulations. They would have their own price for their tea. They had it. And common bohea tea was sold at the enormous price of nine shillings the pound. Will you again trust to the honour of these men? You had better trust to the mercy of a Turk.

Indulge me in a few sentences more upon this same subject of Tea. It is well known that little or no tea has been entered at the Custom-House for several years. All that is imported is smuggled from Holland, and the Dutch Island in the West-Indies. In this trade the laws of our country are trampled upon.

The

The nation is defrauded of its revenues. The sacredness of an oath, the grand security of the liberty, and property, and lives of Englishmen, is prostituted to the vile purposes of private gain. Perjury, and false-swearing are encouraged by those very merchants, to whose honour we are now to trust, that they will not demand an unreasonable profit on their goods.

Let the guilty alone take this to themselves. I mean no reflections on the fair-trader. But never will I believe that the man who can coolly and deliberately encourage perjury or false-swearing—who can calmly lay schemes, and repeatedly execute them, in order to defraud his country of her revenues, would ever hesitate one moment, whether he should not prostitute his honour, and cheat me too, could he do it with equal security.

The poor culprit, who, perhaps forced by necessity, turns informer, is branded with ignominy—is treated as an out-cast from society: But the lordly merchant, who, wallowing in wealth, can plead no necessity, tramples on the most sacred obligations, and yet holds up his head, and boasts himself a man of honour. O Shame! Shame! Shame!

I know not how it happens, but not only the merchants, but the generality of citizens, treat us *countrymen* with very undeserved contempt. They act as though they thought, that all wisdom, all knowledge, all understanding and sense, centered in themselves, and that we farmers were utterly ignorant of every thing, but just to drive our oxen, and to follow the plough. We are never consulted, but when they cannot do without us. And then, all the plans are laid in the City before they are offered to us. Be the potion they prepare for us ever so nauseous, we must swallow it down, as well as we can. It is not many years since the Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonalty of the city, shewed their contempt of us, in the most insulting manner. They passed a law to regulate the prices of our produce; and instead of protecting us in their markets, we were exposed to continual abuse and insults. We could not carry a quart of milk, a duck, a chicken,---I think not an egg,---I am sure not a quail or *snipe*, to market, in peace. If they were scarce, we durst not ask an advanced price; for if we did, a fine--or imprisonment, was our portion.---Did they also fix the price of *shop-goods*? catch them at that, and I will humbly ask their pardon.---Where was honour at this time? Troth I cannot tell: But were it necessary, I could easily tell you where she was not.

I may perhaps at another time, tell you a little more of my mind upon this matter : At present let us attend to another circumstance, which I think renders the honour of the New-York merchants a little suspicious ; and convinces me, that we have no sufficient ground to trust to it. Common sense cannot utterly have quitted the city. There must be some merchants who are sensible of the evil tendency of this Non-consumption, Non-importation and Non-exportation agreement. But where is the man who has had honour enough to avow his sentiments and oppose it ? Shew him to me, and I will reverence him as " The noblest work of God." Six honest merchants, who had honour, virtue, and courage enough, openly to avow their sentiments, and act accordingly, would yet save you, and their country, from ruin.

But the conduct of the merchants presents a very different prospect. Whatever their particular sentiments may be, they all appear to acquiesce in this fatal determination of our deluded Congress. They seem to have expected it ; for it is said, that they have imported much more largely than usual : This makes me suspect, that this bustle about Non-importation, &c, has its rise, not from Patriotism, but selfishness. I have heard that merchants sometimes make an artificial scarcity, by engrossing particular commodities in a few hands, that they may avail themselves of the necessity of the buyer, and get a good price. We Countrymen are in this situation. No more goods can be imported : the merchants have us at their mercy : let them set their price ever so high, necessity will oblige us to come to their terms.

Consider the matter in another light, and still it will appear, that this Non-importation scheme will and must raise the prices of goods ; not only now, but probably for some years to come,

There are in New-York many merchants with large capitals, and of very extensive credit : these probably have laid in a large supply of goods, enough to last as long as the Non-importation continues. At least, when their stores are like to become empty, they will have weight enough to break up the agreement. There are many other merchants whose capitals are small, and their credit confined : these probably can have laid in no great stock. If the Non-importation agreement continues any length of time, the wealthy merchant will grow enormously rich, the merchant with a small capital will probably fail. For consider---the small merchant must sell his goods as soon as possible, that he may support his family, and his credit by making timely remittances. The wealthy merchant can wait till the small stores are exhausted,
and

and then he may command a double profit: in the mean time the inferior merchant is out of business: his goods are all sold, and sold at a small profit: he cannot import: he must live on his small capital. As soon as the wealthy merchant finds his store near empty, he will have influence enough to break the agreement; and money and credit enough to import largely again: but the inferior merchant is ruined: he has lived on his capital: it is gone: if he is not in *debt*, he has nothing to be-

These inferior merchants are of great consequence to the community: they keep down the price of goods, and prevent its becoming excessive: they must make quick sales that they may make their remittances in due season. They must therefore take what their goods will fetch: But the wealthy merchant can wait for a better price, without hurting his estate or credit; or else he must be content with the same advance with the merchant of small capital.

Another argument to prove that the prices of goods will increase is, that they are already increased, even before the fatal day fixed for the commencement of the Non-importation Agreement. Several persons, whom I take to be good judges, have assured me, that the prices of woolsens, linens, &c. are very perceptibly increased in the shops in New-York. And I was told, by a very credible man from New-York, that the price of gun-powder was raised from 9 or 10l. to 17 or 18l. per hundred. I know you'll stare, and wish to know what could so enormously advance the article of Gun-powder: I'll tell you; It was the great and sudden demand for it, when the Putmans and Co. of New-England, were in such a violent hurry to divert themselves with fighting the King's troops: and should these heroes take it into their heads to divert themselves with push-pin, I suppose the price of *pins* would rise in the same proportion.

I come now to the consideration of another probable consequence of a Non-importation agreement, which is, That it will excite the resentment of the government at home against us, and induce the Parliament to block up our ports and prevent our trade intirely. It would certainly be good policy in the government to do so. Few Colonies are settled but by a trading people, and by them chiefly for the benefit of trade. The grand design of England in settling the American Colonies, was to extend her trade—to open a new vent for her manufactures. If then we
stop

stop our imports, the benefit of our trade is in a manner lost to her, and she would find but little additional disadvantage, should she stop our trade with all the world.

But should the government pursue milder measures---though we indeed have no right to expect it will---yet the Congress have determined the expediency of our stopping our own trade, after a limited time, viz, ten months. In either case the consequence will be much the same; and it matters but little whether the government blocks up our ports, or whether we ourselves voluntarily put an end to our exports, as well as imports; after the 10th of September next we are to have but little trade except with our neighbouring colonies.

Consider the consequence, Should the government interpose, we shall have no trade at all, and consequently no vent for the produce of our farms. Such part of our wheat, flax-seed, corn, beef, pork, butter, cheese, as was not consumed in the province, must be left to rot and stink upon our hands.

Should the government leave us to ourselves, the little trade that would be open, would never keep these articles at such a price, as to make it worth while to raise more of them than we want for our own consumption.

Look well to yourselves, I beseech you. From the day that the exports from this province are stopped, the farmers may date the commencement of their ruin. Can you live without money? Will the shop-keeper *give* you his goods? Will the weavers, shoemaker, blacksmith, carpenter, work for you without pay? If they will, it is more than they will do for me. And unless you can sell your produce, how are you to get money? Nor will the case be better, if you are obliged to sell your produce at an under-rate; for then it will not pay you for the labour and expence of raising it. But this is the least part of the distress that will come upon you.

Unhappily, many of you are in debt, and obliged to pay the enormous interest of seven pounds on the hundred, for considerable sums. It matters not whether your debts have been contracted through necessity, or carelessness: You must pay them, at *least* the interest, punctually; the usurer will not wait long; indeed you cannot expect he should: You have had his money, and are obliged, in justice, to pay him the principal and interest, according to agreement. But without selling your produce,
you

you can neither pay the one, nor the other; the consequence will be that after a while, a process of law will be commenced against you, and your farms must be sold by execution; and then you will have to pay not only principal and interest, but Sheriffs fees, Lawyers fees, and a long list of *et ceteras*.

Nor, under these circumstances, will your farms fetch half what they cost you. What is a farm good for, the produce of which cannot be sold? Had matters continued in their old course, some one of your neighbours, who knew the value of your farm, might have been willing and able to have given you a reasonable price for it, had you been disposed, or obliged to sell; but he has more wit than to buy a farm, when he cannot sell its produce. Your creditor then, or some rich merchant, or usurer, must take it at their own price: To you it is of no consequence who takes it; for you are ruined, stripped of your farm, and very probably of the means of subsistence for yourself and family. Glorious effect of Non-exportation! Think a little, and then tell me---when the Congress adopted this cursed scheme, did they in the least consider your interest? No, impossible! they ignorantly misunderstood, carelessly neglected, or basely betrayed you.

But, it is said, that all legal processes are to be stopped, except in criminal cases.---That is to say---the lower class of people are to be deprived of their daily bread, by being thrown out of employment by the Non-Exportation agreement; to prevent starving, many of them will be tempted to steal; if they steal, they are to be hanged. The dishonest fellow, who owes money, may, by refusing payment, ruin his creditor; but there is no remedy, no process is to be issued against him. This may be justice, but it looks so much like cruelty, that a man of a humane heart would be more apt to call it by the latter, than the former name.

But pray, by whose authority are the courts of Justice to be shut up, in all civil cases?---Who shall DARE to stop the Courts of Justice?---A very pretty story indeed! I buy a cow of my poor neighbour, and I promise to pay him at Christmas: he wants the money to pay his shoe-maker, taylor, &c. my rascally neighbour, on the other side, owes me ten pounds; I depend upon this money to pay for the cow: he refuses payment: the Courts of Justice are shut up: I cannot sue him, nor can I pay my debt for want of the money.

My neighbour Dick Stubbs has a farm which he rents to Peter Doubtful for 20l. a year. Dick is an honest, good sort of a

man, but rather negligent, and depends upon this soil, to enable him to make both ends of the year meet, as we say. There is one Tim Twistwell, a Rascal from New-England, who lays claim to Stubbs's farm, tho' he has no more right to it than the Pope of Rome. He knows his right is good for nothing, and has never dared to prosecute it, though he has money enough, and has been *barping* upon it these seven years. But he has lately made several attempts to corrupt Doubtful the tenant. Should he succeed, and get possession of the farm, how is Stubbs to recover his right, when the courts of justice are shut up? You may say that he must wait till the courts are opened, and then he may prosecute his claim. It may be so. But remember, that the same violence which now shuts the courts of justice, may keep them shut, till poor Stubbs is absolutely ruined.

Rouse, my Friends, rouse from your stupid lethargy. Mark the men who shall dare to impede the course of justice. Brand them as the infamous betrayers of the rights of their country. The grand security of the property, the liberty, the lives of Englishmen, consists in the due administration of justice. While the courts are duly attended to, and fairly conducted, our property is safe. As soon as they are shut, every thing is precarious: for neither property, nor liberty, have any foundation to stand upon.

Tell me not of Delegates, Congresses, Committees, Riots, Mobs, Insurrections, Associations,---a plague on them all.--- Give me the steady, uniform, unbiassed influence of the Courts of Justice. I have been happy under their protection, and I trust in God, I shall be so again.

But after all, some of you, I fear, look forward with pleasure, to those halcyon days of security, when the Courts shall be shut. Undisturbed by the clamours of creditors, undismayed by the sight of the Sheriff, you think to pass your lives in quietness and peace.---But ah! my friends! trust not the fatal, the ill-judged security. You would not, I hope, be so dishonest as not to do your utmost endeavour to pay your debts; besides, while the Courts of Justice are shut, you will be apt to be careless. You will neglect paying your interest, your debts will accumulate, your creditors will be irritated; and as soon as a legal process can be commenced, you will be ruined before you can look about you.

Some of you are indebted to the loan-office. You have your money, it is true, at a low rate: You pay only five *per centum*:
But

But if you cannot sell your produce, you can no more pay five *per cent.* than seven. The shutting up of the Courts of Justice can here give you no relief. By virtue of the act which regulates the Loan-Office, your farms, if you fail to pay the interest, will be sold in a limited time, without any judicial process at all.

Some of you, also, are tenants at will; and if you fail in paying your rents, you may be turned off, with little or no warning.

Consider now the situation you will be in, if Great-Britain, provoked by your Non-Importation Agreement, should shut up our ports; or should the Non-Exportation agreed to by the Congress, take effect. In that case you will not be able to sell your produce: you cannot pay even the interest of the money you are indebted for: your farms must be sold, and you and your families turned out, to beggary and wretchedness.—Blessed fruits of Non-Importation and Non-Exportation! The farmer that is in debt, will be ruined: the farmer that is clear in the world, will be obliged to run in debt, to support his family: and while the proud merchant, and the forsworn smuggler, riot in their ill-gotten wealth; the laborious farmers, the grand support of every well-regulated country, must all go to the dogs together.—Vile! Shamefull! Diabolical Device!

Let us now attend a little to the Non-Consumption Agreement, which the Congress, in their Association, have imposed upon us. After the first of March we are not to purchase or use any East-India Tea whatsoever; nor any goods, wares, or merchandize from Great-Britain or Ireland, imported after the first day of December next: nor any molasses, syrups, &c. from the British plantations in the West-Indies, or from Dominica; nor wine from Madeira, or the Western Islands; nor foreign indigo.

Will you submit to this slavish regulation?—You must.—Our sovereign Lords and Masters, the High and Mighty Delegates, in Grand Continental Congress assembled, have ordered and directed it. They have directed the Committees in the respective colonies, to establish such further regulations as they may think proper, for carrying their association, of which this Non-consumption agreement is a part, into execution. Mr. ***** of New-York, under the authority of their High-Mightinesses, the Delegates, by, and with the advice of his Privy Council, the Committee of New-York, hath issued his mandate, bearing date Nov. 7, 1774, recommending it to the freeholders and free-

C

men

men of New-York, to assemble on the 18th of November, to choose eight persons out of every ward, to be a Committee, to carry the Association of the Congress into execution.——The business of the Committee so chosen is to be, to inspect the conduct of the inhabitants, and see whether they violate the Association.——Among other things, Whether they drink any Tea or wine in their families, after the first of March; or wear any British or Irish manufactures; or use any English molasses, &c. imported after the first day of December next. If they do, their names are to be published in the Gazette, that they may be *publickly known*, and *universally contemned*, as *foes to the Rights of British America*, and *enemies of American Liberty*.—And then *the parties of the said Association will respectively break off all dealings with him or her*.---In plain English,---They shall be considered as Out-laws, unworthy of the protection of civil society, and delivered over to the vengeance of a lawless, outrageous mob, to be *tarr'd, feathered, banged, drawn, quartered, and burnt*.---O rare American Freedom!

Probably, as soon as this point is settled in New-York, the said Mr. ***** in the plenitude of his power, by, and with the advice of his Privy Council aforesaid, will issue his Mandate to the supervisors in the several counties, as he did about the choice of Delegates, and direct them to have Committees chosen in their respective districts, for the same laudable purpose.

Will you be instrumental in bringing the most abject slavery on yourselves? Will you choose such Committees? Will you submit to them, should they be chosen by the weak, foolish, turbulent part of the country people?---Do as you please: but, by HIM that made me, I will not.---No, if I must be enslaved, let it be by a KING at least, and not by a parcel of upstart lawless Committee-men. If I must be devoured, let me be devoured by the jaws of a lion, and not *gnawed* to death by rats and vermin.

Did you choose your supervisors for the purpose of enslaving you? What right have they to fix up advertisements to call you together, for a very different purpose from that for which they were elected? Are our supervisors our masters?---And should half a dozen foolish people meet together again, in consequence of their advertisements, and choose themselves to be a Committee, as they did in many districts, in the affair of choosing Delegates, are we obliged to submit to such a Committee?---You ought, my friends, to assert your own freedom. Should
such

such another attempt be made upon you, assemble yourselves together: tell your supervisor, that he has exceeded his commission:---That you will have no such Committees:---That you are Englishmen, and will maintain your rights and privileges, and will eat, and drink, and wear, whatever the public laws of your country permit, without asking leave of any illegal, tyrannical Congress or Committee on earth.

But however, as I said before, do as you please: If you like it better, choose your Committee, or suffer it to be chosen by half a dozen Fools in your neighbourhood,---open your doors to them,---let them examine your tea-cannisters, and molasses-jugs, and your wives and daughters petty-coats,---bow, and cringe, and tremble, and quake,---fall down and worship our sovereign Lord the Mob.---But I repeat it, By H----n, I will not.---No, my house is my castle: as such I will consider it, as such I will defend it, while I have breath. No *King's* officer shall enter it without my permission, unless supported by a warrant from a magistrate.---And shall my house be entered, and my mode of living enquired into, by a domineering Committee-man? Before I submit, I will die: live *you*, and be slaves.

Do, I say, as you please: but should any pragmatical Committee-gentleman come to my house, and give himself airs, I shall shew him the door, and if he does not soon take himself away, a good hiccory cudgel shall teach him better manners.

There is one article more of the Association, which exhibits such a striking instance of the ignorance, or inattention of the Congress to the Farmers interest, that I must take notice of it to you; especially as it will give me an opportunity of mentioning as striking an instance of the arbitrary, illegal, and tyrannical procedure of the Committee of Correspondence in New-York.

The article I mean, is the seventh, relative to the encreasing of the number and improving of the breed of sheep. No sheep of any kind are to be exported to the West-Indies, or elsewhere. Why, for Gods sake, were *weathers* included in this prohibition? Will weathers encrease the number, or improve the breed of sheep? I with the Gentlemen of the Congress, and the Committee-men of New-York, would try the experiment. Let them buy a score of weathers, and feed, and nurse them for a twelve-month; and then publish an account of the number of lambs they have produced, their enormous size, with the quantity & fineness of their wool; that we may know in what manner the num

her and breed of sheep may be encreased, and improved, by keeping weathers. But let this account be under oath, or I shall not believe that they have succeeded, either in encreasing the number, or improving the breed. I solemnly declare I never had one lamb produced from a weather in my whole life; and have always been so ignorant, that I should no more expect a lamb from a weather, than a calf from an ox.

But it may be said, that weathers will produce wool, and that it is for the sake of the wool that their exportation is prevented. I readily own that weathers will produce wool, though not lambs. But let me ask you, my brother farmers, which of you would keep a flock of sheep barely for the sake of their wool? Not one of you. If you cannot sell your sheep to advantage at a certain age, you cannot keep them to any profit. An Ewe should not be kept after she is six years old, nor a weather after he is four: few of you choose to keep them so long. What now must be done with our sheep when they become so old that we can keep them no longer with advantage? We are ordered *to kill them sparingly*: a queer phrase; however, let it pass. If it is not *classical*, it is *congressional*; and that's enough. And after having killed them *sparingly*, if we have any to *spare*, we must *spare* them to our poor neighbours. But supposing that after *killing them sparingly*, and *sparing* as many to my poor neighbours as they want, I should, by reason of *killing them sparingly*, have still more to *spare*--what shall I do with them? Exported they must not be. Why! fat them well, and sell them to the New-Yorkers: The deuce take them for a set of gundy gutted fellows---will they let us export nothing? Do they intend to eat all our wheat, and rye, and corn, and beef, and pork, and mutton, and butter, and cheese, and turkeys, and geese, and ducks, and fowls, and chickens and eggs, &c? the devil is in't if their bellies are not filled. And yet see their ill-nature and malice against us farmers.---After having furnished them with all this good cheer, which they must have at their own price too, they will not in return let us have a dish of tea to please our wives, nor a glass of Madeira to cheer our spirits, nor even a spoonful of Molasses to sweeten our butter-milk. To be serious---

Had the Congress attended in the least to the farmers interest, they never would have prohibited the exportation of sheep, after they came to a certain age. It is the exportation that keeps up the price of sheep; it is the advantageous price that encourages the farmer to feed them: Take away the profit of selling them, and the farmer will keep but very few. For they are not, and I am confident never will be in this country, worth keeping for their wool alone.

However

However, right or wrong, the Congress have passed the decree. *Thou shalt not export sheep*, was pronounced at Philadelphia; and, right or wrong, the Committee of New-York are determined to put it in execution: And *thou shalt not export sheep*, is echoed back from New-York.

How this decree is to be supported in New-York, may be learned from the following affair. A Gentleman, an officer in the King's service, had purchased a number of sheep to carry with him to St. Vincent's: Mr. G A I N E's news-paper says eighteen. The New-Yorkers, probably affraid that they should loose their share of the mutton, assembled on the dock, sent for the Committee, and in open violation of the laws of their country, obliged the merchant to whom the vessel had been consigned, to have the sheep landed; the sheep were committed to safe durance till the vessel sailed, and then were delivered to the proprietor--I suppose to the person who had sold them to the officer: Though how he could be the proprietor after he had sold them, I cannot see. Had I been the person, I would have had nothing to do with them; the Committee might have done what they pleased with them---*killed them sparingly*, or *spared* them to their poor neighbours. But had there been law or justice in the government, I would have been paid for them: though, now I think of it, I would have made a present of them to the Committee, upon condition that they should make the experiment how far the number and breed of sheep can be increased and improved by keeping weathers; for I have been positively assured, that these same sheep, which made all this bustle, were nothing more,

Here now, my friends, is a flagrant instance of injustice and cruelty committed by a riotous mob;---for a number of people, be they Committee-men, or who you please, assembled to do an unlawful action, especially in the night, deserve no better name, ---against both the buyer and seller of the sheep, in open violation of the laws of the government in which we live, and of the rights of the city in which it was perpetrated; and not a single magistrate had virtue or courage enough to interpose. O shame to humanity! Hold up your heads, ye Committee-men of New-York! Deny the charge if ye can. But remember, the instant ye deny it, ye forfeit all pretensions to truth or conscience.

Think me not too severe. Anarchy and Confusion, Violence and Oppression, distress my country; and I must, and *will* speak. Though the open violator of the laws may escape punishment, through the pusillanimity of the magistrates, he shall feel the
lash

lash of my pen: and he shall feel it again and again, till remorse shall sting his guilty conscience, and shame cover his opprobrious head.

But perhaps you will say, that these men are contending for our rights; that they are defending our liberties; and though they act against law, yet that the necessity of the times will justify them. Let me see. I sell a number of sheep. I drive them to New-York, and deliver them to the purchaser. A mob interposes, and obliges me to take my sheep again, and drive them home for my pains, or sell them there for just what they please to give me. Are these the rights, is this the liberty, these men are contending for? It is vile, abject slavery, and I will have none of it. These men defend our rights, and liberties, who act in open defiance of the laws? No. They are making us the most abject slaves that ever existed. The necessity of the times justify them in violating the first principles of civil society! Who induced this necessity? Who involved the province in discord, anarchy and confusion? These very men. They created that necessity, which they now plead in their own justification.

Let me intreat you, my Friends, to have nothing to do with these men, or with any of the same stamp. Peace and quietness suit you best. Confusion, and Discord, and Violence, and War, are sure destruction to the *farmer*. Without peace he cannot till his lands; unless protected by the laws, he cannot carry his produce to market. Peace indeed is departed from us for the present, and the protection of the laws has ceased. But I trust in God, there is yet one method left, which, by prudent management, will free us from all our difficulties; restore peace again to our dwellings, and give us the firm security of the laws for our protection. Renounce all dependence on Congresses, and Committees. They have neglected, or betrayed your interests. Turn then your eyes to your *constitutional* representatives. They are the true, and legal, and have been hitherto, the faithful defenders of your rights, and liberties; and you have no reason to think but that they will ever be so. They will probably soon meet in General Assembly. Address yourselves to them. They are the proper persons to obtain redress of any grievances that you can justly complain of. You can trust their wisdom and prudence, that they will use the most reasonable, constitutional, and effectual methods of restoring that peace and harmony, between Great Britain and this province, which is so earnestly wished for by all good men, and which is so absolutely necessary for the happiness of us all. Present a petition to them, intreating them to take
the

the m
comp
direct
them
ing m
struct
barra

Yo
happy
inform
the r
great
and e
to fet
and t
again
in the
confic
work

An
of the
us w
bosom
This
oppor
possib
condu
termin
No

Mu
the D
the con
passive
their l

the matter into their own hands, and to labour earnestly to accomplish so blessed a purpose. But beware of giving them any directions *how* to proceed. As soon as ever you attempt to *instruct* them, you lay yourselves open to be duped and fooled by designing men, in the drawing of your instructions. Some will instruct them to do one thing, and some another, and you will embarrass, but not help forward their deliberations.

Your REPRESENTATIVES know perfectly the state of the unhappy breach between our mother country and us. They want no information in this point. The more you trust them at this time, the more you will put it in their power to serve you; and the greater obligation you will lay them under to serve you *faithfully*, and *effectually*. Only beseech them to heal this unnatural breach; to settle this destructive contention; that peace and quietness, and the firm protection of law, and good government, may again be our happy lot. Would the several counties, or towns in the province, conduct themselves in this manner, God, I am confident, would bless, and give a prosperous issue to so good a work.

And whatever you may be taught by designing men, to think of the government at home, they, I am certain, would embrace us with the arms of friendship; they would press us to their bosoms, to their hearts, would we give them a fair opportunity. This opportunity our *Assembly* alone can give them. And this opportunity, I trust, they will give them, unless we prevent all possibility of accommodation, by our own perverseness, and ill conduct. And then, God only knows where our distresses may terminate.

November 16, 1774.

A. W. FARMER.

P O S T S C R I P T.

Much stress has been laid, it seems, upon the *unanimity* of the Delegates, and it has been urged, that *all the inhabitants of the continent* should think themselves in *honour* obliged to abide *passively* by their decisions, be they what they *may*, as they were *their Representatives*.---But I would just observe, that not *one per-*
son

son in an hundred (to speak much within bounds) throughout this province at least, gave his vote for their election: and as to the unanimity which was supposed to prevail amongst them, it is now pretty generally understood, and it is an undoubted fact, that not only most or all of the New-York members, but many others, of the most respectable characters amongst them, warmly opposed their conduct in a MULTITUDE of instances; though they had unhappily agreed, before their entrance upon business, that neither protest nor dissent should appear upon their minutes. The arts and stratagems used on this and some other occasions, during the session of the Congress, together with the caballing out of doors, and the UNFAIR DEALINGS within, will fill up more pages, than are comprehended in the present Letter to my Fellow-Farmers.



POSTSCRIPT.

the
ow
ot
of
eir
p-
ner
nd
on
the
are